

# memorandum

date July 8, 2010

to Chehalis River Basin Flood Authority

from ESA Adolfson

subject Flood Districts

At the May 20, 2010 meeting, the Flood Authority approved a contract with FCS Group to assist the Authority in formation of a basin-wide flood district. The FCS Group held a kickoff meeting on June 24 to discuss the difference between Flood Control Districts and Flood Control Zone Districts and to outline policy issues that will need to be resolved before a district is formed. The FCS Group will continue this work at the July 15 Flood Authority morning work session.

The answers to many of these policy questions, particularly those relating to raising of funds, depend on what the flood district is intended to do. Over the past two years, many ideas have been raised by Flood Authority members and others. Based on these ideas, this memo outlines what we expect the flood district will do, particularly in the first several years of operation. We present this memo for discussion at the July 15 work session and we hope the discussion will guide the district formation process.

## **Role of a Flood District in the Chehalis River Basin**

The overall purpose of a flood district would be to serve as a basin-wide entity to implement and fund flood mitigation projects throughout the Chehalis River basin. The state legislature has directed the Flood Authority to participate in the identification of flood hazard mitigation projects for the Chehalis River basin and most recently directed the Flood Authority to establish a flood district for that purpose and to carry out on-going projects such as the Early Warning System. In addition, the Flood Authority has identified a number of flood mitigation projects and actions in its basin-wide Comprehensive Flood Hazard Management Plan that local jurisdictions would like to pursue, but lack the funding to implement.

In the first few years of operation, we anticipate that the flood district will:

**Fulfill the role of the Flood Authority set out in House Bills 3374 and 3375.** House Bill 3375 states:

“The office of financial management shall participate as the nonfederal sponsor of the United States army corps of engineers flood hazard mitigation projects for the Chehalis river basin area, including the project authorized by the water resources development act of 2007 and projects to be developed under the basin-wide study authorized by United States house resolution 2581, if such projects are mutually agreed to between the federal government, the office of financial

management, and the Chehalis basin flood control authority or other authorized local government group.”

It is assumed that a basin-wide flood district would replace the Flood Authority as the authorized local government group and the 2010 state legislature specifically directed the Flood Authority to form a flood district.

**Operate and maintain the basin-wide Early Warning System.** The Early Warning System, currently being developed for the Flood Authority by WEST Consulting, will involve several elements that require ongoing operation and maintenance funding, including a web interface, new stream gauges, and other warning devices. It is anticipated that WEST will have additional recommendations for the Early Warning System that cannot be implemented with existing project funding. Funding and implementation of these recommendations could be pursued by the flood district.

**Coordinate with the Corps of Engineers and other entities on major basin-wide projects.** This includes the proposed upstream storage project, the Twin Cities project, the basin-wide general investigation, and potential combinations of the three. The flood district will continue to coordinate with the Corps of Engineers, the Lewis County PUD, and other entities in providing local input on these projects and moving them forward. The flood district could become the local sponsor of these projects in future phases, particularly in the operation and maintenance phase.

**Refine and prioritize the projects identified in the Flood Plan.** The Flood Plan approved by the Flood Authority at the June 17 meeting includes a start list of local projects, both structural and nonstructural. This list of projects needs further development and prioritization, and there are data gaps that need to be filled. The project list includes projects that local jurisdictions would like to implement, but lack the funding to pursue. In the future, the flood district can set rates, taxes, or assessments to fund the projects on this list.

**Establish a staff with technical expertise and a broad initial funding base.** The district will need both in order to complete the above tasks.

Once it is firmly established, the flood district could provide other services, such as implementing projects identified in the Flood Plan, retaining additional technical staff to support local jurisdictions in flood management, or providing local match for grants to elevate or buy-out homes in the floodplain. Currently no capital projects, particularly on a basin-wide scale, have been developed to the degree that a flood district could set rates, taxes, or assessments to pay for it.